

What should I do?

If any of the early symptoms occur after eating shellfish, induce vomiting and get medical help immediately. There is no known antidote.

**The Department of Health
cannot guarantee the safety
of recreationally harvested
shellfish!**

Shellfish can also be affected by other kinds of contamination. Be sure to gather shellfish away from pollution sources.

Questions?

Call your local health department or the Washington State Department of Health, Office of Food Safety & Shellfish Programs during office hours at (360)236-3330.



Marine Biotoxin Hotline is provided by the Washington State Department of Health Office of Food Safety & Shellfish Programs in cooperation with local health agencies.

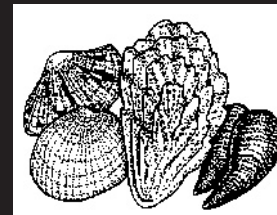
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RED



TIDE

MARINE BIOTOXIN HOTLINE

Before you dig call

1-800-562-5632

or visit our web page at

www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/biotoxin.htm

Eating shellfish contaminated by a naturally occurring, toxic organism can cause serious illness, even death.

Each time you plan to gather shellfish from Puget Sound or other Washington beaches, call this 24-hour toll-free number or visit our web page for information on current biotoxin conditions.



How can I tell if shellfish are toxic?

The only foolproof way is through laboratory testing of the shellfish. Paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) and domoic acid poison toxins can be present with no apparent signs. Remember that boiling, cooking, or soaking the live shellfish in water does not remove or destroy the toxin.

What is the best way to keep informed on current conditions?

Call the Biotoxin Hotline (1-800-562-5632) or access our biotoxin web page at: www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/biotoxin.htm

Because conditions change rapidly, you should call or access our web site each time you plan to gather shellfish. These two resources provide information which can considerably reduce the risk of paralytic shellfish or domoic acid poisoning.

What about “red tide”?

Paralytic shellfish poison and domoic acid poison are rarely associated with a red tinge to the water. Don't assume the shellfish are safe if the water is NOT red. Reddish coloration of the water is more commonly associated with similar, but non-toxic, organisms. Both PSP and domoic acid can be present in large amounts when the water appears clear.

What causes the toxin?

When conditions such as sunlight, water temperature, and nutrients are favorable, a microscopic, poison-producing plankton can reproduce very rapidly in sea water. When shellfish feed on this plankton, they accumulate the toxin.

Are all shellfish potentially hazardous?

Clams, oysters, mussels, scallops, and moonsnails can become contaminated by the toxins. Crab may accumulate toxin in the gut. It is unknown if or how the toxin accumulates in finfish and other shellfish such as shrimp.

How will I know if I've eaten toxic shellfish?

The PSP toxin affects the nervous system. Early physical symptoms include tingling and numbness of the lips and tongue. Depending on how much toxin is consumed, symptoms may progress to tingling of the fingers and toes, difficulty breathing, and loss of control in the arms and legs. Death can occur if the respiratory system becomes paralyzed.

Domoic acid poisoning starts with gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps within the first 24 hours. In more severe cases, neurological symptoms may develop within 48 hours that include headache, dizziness, confusion, and loss of short-term memory.

Domoic acid poisoning has been present above closure levels on coastal beaches in Washington State, but the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound have not had toxin levels high enough to close those beaches.



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If you have questions, contact:

Office of Health Promotion

P.O. Box 47833 Olympia, WA 98504-7833

(360) 236-3736

Sincerely,

Health Education Resource Exchange Web Team

P R I N T I N G S P E C I F I C A T I O N S

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